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DE RUEHIN #1356 3192342  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 152342Z NOV 09  
FM AIT TAIPEI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2714  
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 9500  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0905

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 001356

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TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT OBAMA'S SPEECH IN TOKYO

¶1. Summary: On November 15, all of Taiwan's major Chinese-language and English-language dailies reported on U.S. President Barack Obama's speech delivered Saturday in Tokyo, while some put a special emphasis on Obama's remarks regarding China. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a banner headline on its international news page, reading "Obama's Trip to Asia: Regarding Itself as a Pacific Nation, the United States Reiterates [Its] Commitment to Security in the Asia Pacific." Headlines in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily," pro-unification "United Daily News," and the China-focused "Want Daily" all said that Obama "affirms China's rise without mentioning Taiwan." Two papers -- the "Liberty Times" and "Apple Daily" -- also carried excerpts of Obama's speech.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "United Daily News" analysis said Obama's speech sketched a blueprint showing that he will adopt a policy to promote closer ties with Asia than the previous Bush administration. But the article also said Obama's remarks on the rise of China and his failure to discuss China's military threats to the region and some negative factors in U.S.-China relations, such as human rights and the Tibet issue, will likely draw concerns from those who pay close attention to regional security and development. End summary.

A) "Roping in Asia: Obama Changes First While China's Human Rights [Situation] Remains Unchanged"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang noted in an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (11/15):

"In his speech delivered in Tokyo, U.S. President Barack Obama declared that the United States is also a 'Pacific nation' and will engage more proactively in Asia-Pacific affairs. Obama used this keynote [speech] to sketch the contours of his administrations' policy that [will promote] closer ties with Asia than [did] the previous Bush administration. Obama, the first black U.S. president who was elected by attracting many people with his campaign slogan 'change' last year, has used real actions to 'change' step by step the long overlooked [U.S. relationship with] Asian-Pacific nations, which were originally lagging behind as a priority in U.S. foreign policy. Chances are that Obama, who is well connected with Asia, will become the U.S. president who has attached the greatest importance to the security and development in the Asia Pacific region over the past few decades. ...

"For Asia, at least there is a U.S. president who no longer 'pays more attention to Europe than Asia' for now -- a 'change' that should be highly valued. But 'changes' also appeared when it comes to [the United States'] relations with China, except that Obama himself did not attempt to change China, but that China has effortlessly changed Obama and the United States he leads. Obama talked a lot about China in his speech, but he merely focused on partnership rather than the differences between the two nations; he only discussed positive developments in the bilateral relationship while either not mentioning or merely lightly touching on those negative factors. ...

"Obama reiterated that the United States will not [seek to] contain China, and he enthusiastically talked about strengthening military exchanges with China right in front of Japan. He also stated [openly] that 'the rise of a strong, prosperous China can be a source of strength for the community of nations.' Perhaps not many countries in the international community, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, will truly echo such an 'open statement of true sentiments.' What is even more incredible was that Obama has shrunk back from issues such as Chinas human rights, religion and the Tibet issue. ....

"In addition, it may not be necessary for Obama to mention Taiwan in his speech, but to everyone's surprise, he has totally overlooked China's military threats to other countries in the region. As a result, should Obama keep such a tone when he visits China on November 15, the content of the joint statement he is to issue jointly with Chinese President Hu Jintao will perhaps leave no room for expectations, or will even draw concerns from those who are concerned about China and regional security and development."

STANTON